



King County Mental Health Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division 2002 Briefing Paper

TREATMENT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES (TASC)

BACKGROUND:

MHCADSD has a contract with Treatment Accountability for Safe Communities (TASC) of King County, a nonprofit agency that provides substance abuse evaluation, drug testing, and case management services for people involved in felony, family law, and child abuse and neglect matters in Superior Court. Clients are referred predominantly by Superior Court, DSHS Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Department of Corrections, and King County probation. Roughly half of the cases referred are felony and half are family law or dependency matters. Priority is given to adult Drug Court clients.

ISSUES/CHALLENGES:

- 1 Due to funding cuts from the 2002 legislative session, the state Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) cut 30% of TASC funds, resulting in the elimination of DASA-funded Family Court Services.
- 2 By November 1, 2002, MHCADSD is required to submit to DASA a plan to merge TASC of King County with the Drug Court for those services to be funded by the DASA contract beginning July 1, 2003.
- 3 Elimination of TASC services places additional burdens on the child welfare system, the courts, and other criminal justice agencies. Judges and child welfare officers will not receive evaluations needed to make decisions about criminal sanctions and residential placement of children. Lack of information about parents' substance abuse problems could result in children placed in dangerous situations. Probation and community corrections officers will have additional responsibility for monitoring offenders who are ordered for substance abuse evaluations and treatment.
- 4 Clients served by TASC are typically resistant to treatment and have little, or no, knowledge of treatment programs. The complexity of their needs and the service systems invites failure without an intermediary to assist with linkages to care and family support.

DATA:

TASC of King County served more than 2,000 individuals in 2001 at an average cost of about \$750. Approximately half of these clients were involved in family law or child abuse and neglect cases, which average about two children per case. If these children spend even one extra month in foster care, due to delay in parents seeking or finding appropriate treatment, the costs of their care will exceed the amount of state funds provided to TASC annually.

RECOMMENDATION/LEGISLATIVE ACTION:

TASC of King County has provided unique services both for Family Court—a kind of treatment on demand for families at risk of losing their children due to drug abuse—and felons involved with the justice system who are identified as drug abusers. King County is opposed to additional cuts to this valuable program.